

Driver Behavior and Awareness

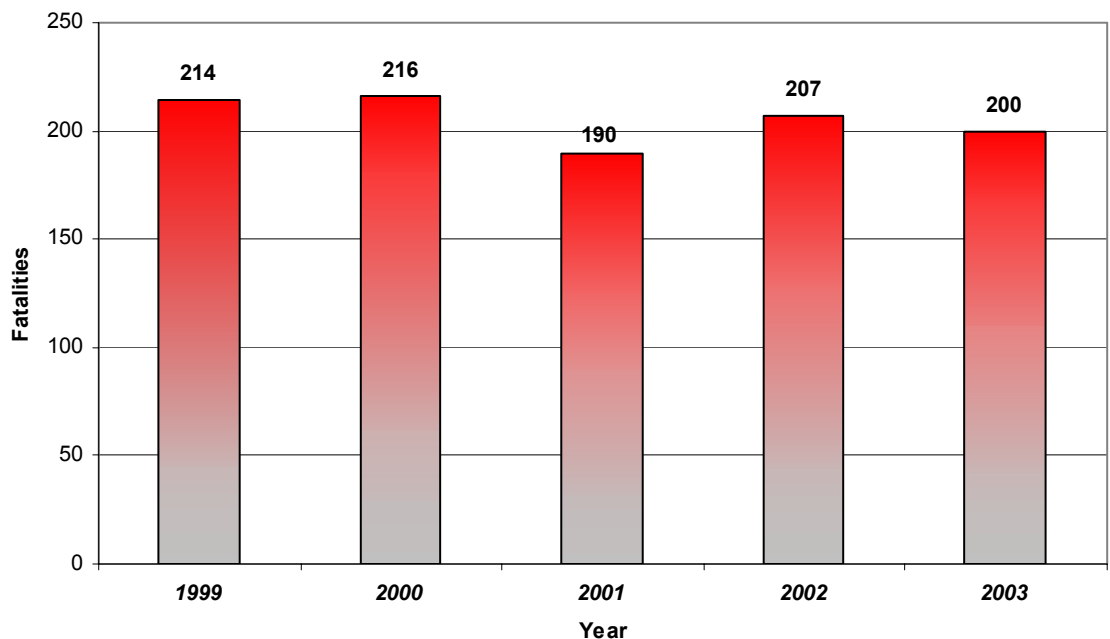
Background

Addressing inappropriate or hazardous driver behaviors is a critical factor in reducing fatal and life-altering injury crashes. Unsafe driving behavior may include, but is not limited to, aggressive driving, excessive speeding, distracted driving such as cell phone usage, drowsy or fatigued driving, and unlicensed driving (suspended, revoked, or no valid license).

Nationally, more than 60 percent of drivers consider unsafe driving by others as a major personal threat to themselves and their families. Statistics show that unsafe driving is becoming more prevalent across the country and is also increasing in severity.

Figure 6. Illinois Unlicensed Driver Fatalities

(Drivers, either surviving or killed, who did not have a valid driver's license at the time of the fatal crash. Includes drivers who were unlicensed or whose license was suspended, revoked, expired, cancelled, or denied.)



Source: IDOT Division of Traffic Safety

Young drivers ages 16-24 continue to be overrepresented in fatal and life-altering injury crashes. In 2003, 502 drivers (ages 16-24) were involved in fatal crashes. The five major contributing factors in such youthful driver fatal crashes are speeding, traveling on the wrong side of the road, failing to yield, reckless driving, and drinking.

In 2003, there were 1,109,131 older (ages 65+) licensed drivers in Illinois; 13 percent of all licensed Illinois drivers. While the data show most older drivers are quite responsible (e.g., high safety belt usage, low alcohol-related crash rates), national fatality rates per 100 million VMT for these drivers mirror the high rates for teen drivers. Furthermore, the inherent frailty of older drivers reduces their chances of surviving a crash and increases the risk of receiving life-altering injuries.

Speed, drowsiness, and unlicensed drivers pose problems to the transportation community. In 2003, 39 percent of Illinois fatal crashes were speed related. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that nationally drowsiness is a factor in 100,000 police reported crashes each year, resulting in 76,000 injuries and 1,500 deaths. In 2003, it was estimated that 200 traffic fatalities were caused by a driver that did not possess a valid driver's license. Refer to Figure 6.

Recent Implemented Strategies

- Enhanced graduated licensing program.
- Focused awareness and enforcement efforts on the 23 counties where 85 percent of the population resides.
- Banned hand-held cell phone usage while driving in Chicago (July 8, 2005).
- Continued implementation of IDOT's Highway Safety Plan initiatives.
- Funded Speeding and Traffic Accident Reduction (STAR) program enabling Secretary of State Police to utilize roving patrols.
- Funded Injury Prevention Programs promoting safe driving behaviors.
- Photo enforcement for red-light running in Chicago.
- Photo enforcement at highway-railroad grade crossings in DuPage County.

Challenges

- Increasing speeds.
- Growing disrespect for other drivers and pedestrians.
- Aggressive and reckless driving habits.
- Drowsy drivers, including shift workers and commercial drivers.
- Increase in unlicensed drivers.
- Driver distraction and cell phone usage.
- Growing population of older drivers (ages 65+).
- Increasing disregard for traffic laws and traffic control devices.
- Youthful driver attitudes toward and exposure to risk.
- Decreasing engineering, enforcement, education, and emergency medical service resources.
- Auto industry marketing of high performance "fast" cars.
- Suicide classification, by state law, requires intent to be proven.

Proposed Strategies

- Explore possible engineering countermeasures such as:
 - Rumble strips
 - Rumble stripes
 - Innovative pavement marking and signing
 - 3-D tape pavement marking
- Pursue more easily read sign fonts such as Clearview.
- Design enforcement “pull over” areas into roadway construction projects.
- Pursue use of speed trailers on routes with high fatality rates.
- Encourage state and local adoption of photo enforcement.
- Expand use of speed monitoring and changeable message signs.
- Consider policies to regulate cell phone and other electronic device usage.
- Use standardized vehicle categorizers for speed monitoring.
- Develop unlicensed/revoked/suspended licenses distribution lists for law enforcement.
- Define and determine the scope of hazardous driver behaviors.
- Educate all roadway users on the dangers of poor driving behaviors.
- Improve the driving environment to minimize or eliminate the external “triggers” of aggressive driving, such as reducing and providing better information about delays.
- Evaluate the impact of poor vehicle maintenance on fatalities and crashes.
- Improve driver compliance with traffic control devices.
- Support increases in traffic violation penalties such as those in school zones.
- Evaluate Illinois Rules of the Road for effectiveness of covered information.
- Assess impact and effectiveness of the Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) law and ensuing reduction in crash involvement.
- Enhance and strictly enforce current GDL laws.
- Enhance driver education:
 - Determine effectiveness of new and existing private and in-school programs
 - Standardize curriculum for classroom and behind-the-wheel education
 - Update instructor preparation and continuing-education programs
- Initiate driver education programs at younger ages.
- Increase required classroom and behind-the-wheel education hours.
- Work with traditional and non-traditional educational organizations to evaluate curriculum effectiveness and promote increased awareness of safer driving.
- Require driver testing on a more frequent basis.
- Identify high-risk demographics (i.e., age, sex, etc.) and direct tailored messages toward select groups.
- Identify other successful age-specific strategies by reviewing research for reducing other risky behaviors (drug use, alcohol use, etc.).
- Work with national partners, advertisers, and media to deliver consistent safety messages.
- Promote National Safety Council’s “Teen Driver: A Family Guide to Teen Driver Safety” as a resource.
- Provide educational programs for high-risk groups (e.g., drivers ages 15-24) addressing injury prevention, occupant protection, DUI, speed, and distraction issues.

- Review Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) Drowsy Driving Committee recommendations for possible implementation.
- Review IDPH Illinois Suicide Prevention Task Force recommendations for possible implementation.
- Review State Farm Insurance's "Project Ignition" program for potential development of traffic safety messages in conjunction with the National Youth Leadership Council.
- Expand implementation of Older Driver Highway Design Handbook.
- Emphasize use of the driver's license "re-testing" form to law enforcement and the Secretary of State for older drivers who seem confused.
- Increase awareness through multiple campaigns:
 - Produce "orange bracelets" and attach to cards containing Illinois CHSP information and the motorists' role as a partner
 - Develop a "Be Safe, Inflate!" campaign for proper tire inflation
 - Provide air pressure gauges with supplemental safety information during National Tire Safety Week
 - Partner with shopping centers to display safety information on advertisement screens, boards, and kiosks
 - Partner with local sports arenas to display information on outfield fences and ice rink boards
 - Hold American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA) Foundation poster and calendar contests
 - Organize and operate a CHSP and safety booth at the Illinois State Fair
 - Partner with American Association of Retired People (AARP) and insurance companies to add supplemental safety information to regular mailings
 - Create lobby displays of CHSP information and highlights for stakeholder office buildings
 - Include safety information with employee paychecks
 - Present safety information on "Illinois Channel," the new government cable television channel
 - Create a lottery game related to safety
 - Accompany parking passes with alcohol-related and general traffic safety literature to university students
 - Require work zone awareness training (view six-minute video) prior to receiving or renewing driver's license
 - Develop safety-related Secretary of State license plates with wide distribution and commitment from stakeholders
- Continue implementing and developing IDOT's Highway Safety Plan initiatives.
- Utilize NCHRP Report 500 - Volume 1: A Guide for Addressing Aggressive-Driving Collisions.
- Utilize NCHRP Report 500 - Volume 2: A Guide for Addressing Collisions Involving Unlicensed Drivers.
- Utilize NCHRP Report 500 - Volume 9: A Guide for Addressing Collisions Involving Older Drivers.
- Investigate all recent implemented strategies for success.